

# Implementation

This Comprehensive Plan focuses on maintaining the City's small-town character and enhancing the quality of life while promoting a vital economy. This Plan is a policy guide or road map on which the City and the development community can base decisions in support of achieving those ideals. By itself, this Plan cannot affect positive change in the community. To have any impact on the City's future, the *Goal and Objectives* and *Plan* sections contained in this Plan must be implemented through a variety of tools that include regulations, policies, processes, and initiatives.

The primary responsibility for implementing the Comprehensive Plan rests with the City Council. The Council may accomplish this ongoing task most notably through the use of the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances, the acceptance of proffers from applicants for rezonings, the imposition of conditions on applicants for special use permits, the development of area-specific improvement plans and through the City's financial functions. In addition, the City's various boards and commissions are key components of the implementation process. They include the Planning Commission, the Board of Zoning Appeals, the Board of Architectural Review, the School Board, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and the Community Appearance Committee. These boards and commissions derive guidance from the Comprehensive Plan and more particularly from its *Goal and Objectives* and *Plan* portions.

## Land Development Regulations

Land development regulations such as the Zoning Ordinance (with the Zoning Map) and the Subdivision Ordinance are the most visible and frequently used implementation tools of the Comprehensive Plan. These ordinances regulate the use, density, placement, subdivision and construction on all properties located in the City. Between 1997 and 2002, 35 amendments to the City's land use regulations were adopted to implement the recommendations of the previous plan (see Appendix B).

The implementation of many of the recommendations contained in this Plan will require additional refinements to the

City's land development regulations. These recommendations include:

- Amending the zoning provisions to provide for the special needs of senior housing.
- Strengthening the housing-related sections of the City Code to protect neighbors and occupants.
- Providing zoning districts whose restrictions more closely fit the characteristics of our existing neighborhoods.
- Amending the zoning map to assure that it more closely approximates the characteristics of existing neighborhoods.
- Pursuing state-enabling legislation to allow the City to require the removal of nonconforming signs after a period of depreciation.
- Developing a coordinated urban forestry plan that details a regular maintenance and continuous planting program.
- Implementing design guidelines for major commercial corridors.
- Considering archaeological preservation regulations.
- Facilitating the development of aesthetically complementary parking structures and supporting elimination of surface parking areas in Old Town Fairfax.
- Facilitating public investment projects in redevelopment areas.
- Refining shared facilities regulations for mixed-use projects to encourage efficient mixed-use project development.
- Establishing a formal policy for review of potential boundary adjustments.

Each of these ordinance changes will require public participation and hearings before the Planning Commission and City Council.

## Rezoning Actions and Special Permits

A key feature of this Comprehensive Plan is the designation of land uses in a range of densities (for example, Medium Density Residential allows 8 to 12 units per acre). In interpreting the Plan for future development requests, the low ends of the ranges are the presumed densities allowed, provided that the City's minimum standards of development are met. The higher densities should only be permitted if the development criteria established in the Land Use Plan are satisfied.

The Code of Virginia provides that a property owner may proffer reasonable conditions for the use or development of property in addition to the regulations contained in the Zoning Ordinance. Proffers should be encouraged with each rezoning proposal to assist in the implementation of this Plan. To that end, conditions may likewise be imposed upon special use permit and special exception applications. Proffers and conditions associated with these applications should be designed to accomplish the objectives listed in the Comprehensive Plan to the extent practicable.

## Specific Studies and Plans

The Comprehensive Plan is, by design, relatively general in nature and often does not provide the level of detail that is sometimes necessary to bring about action. Often, a higher level of detail is necessary to direct positive change. The most notable example of this is in the implementation of the Transportation Plan's recommended street improvements. Although the Plan states general alignments and configurations for various recommended street improvements, those improvements may not be constructed without ascertaining more precise alignments and dimensions. This may be accomplished through detailed engineering and landscaping plans.

Similarly, Comprehensive Plan recommendations are often refined and enhanced by studies, which examine critical issues in detail. Since the 1997 Plan was adopted, dozens of studies and reports have been completed and several important studies are underway (see Appendix B).

Two completed reports contributed significantly to the development of the goals, objectives and strategies that form this Comprehensive Plan. *Tradition with Vision*, the March 1994 report of the City's 2020 Commission, provided a substantial framework for components of the Plan. The Community Appearance Plan, adopted in April 1994, is a companion document to this Comprehensive Plan and to the land development regulations that support the Plan and provide a greater level of detail.

This Comprehensive Plan recommends additional tasks to implement its goals and objectives. Each of the following tasks is expected to offer valuable recommendations toward implementing the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan:

- Developing a corridor master plan for the "business boulevard".
- Creating a geographically based system of local level organization designed to mediate between civic and neighborhood associations and City Council.
- Considering regulatory protection for threatened properties through historic district overlay zoning.

## Financial Mechanisms

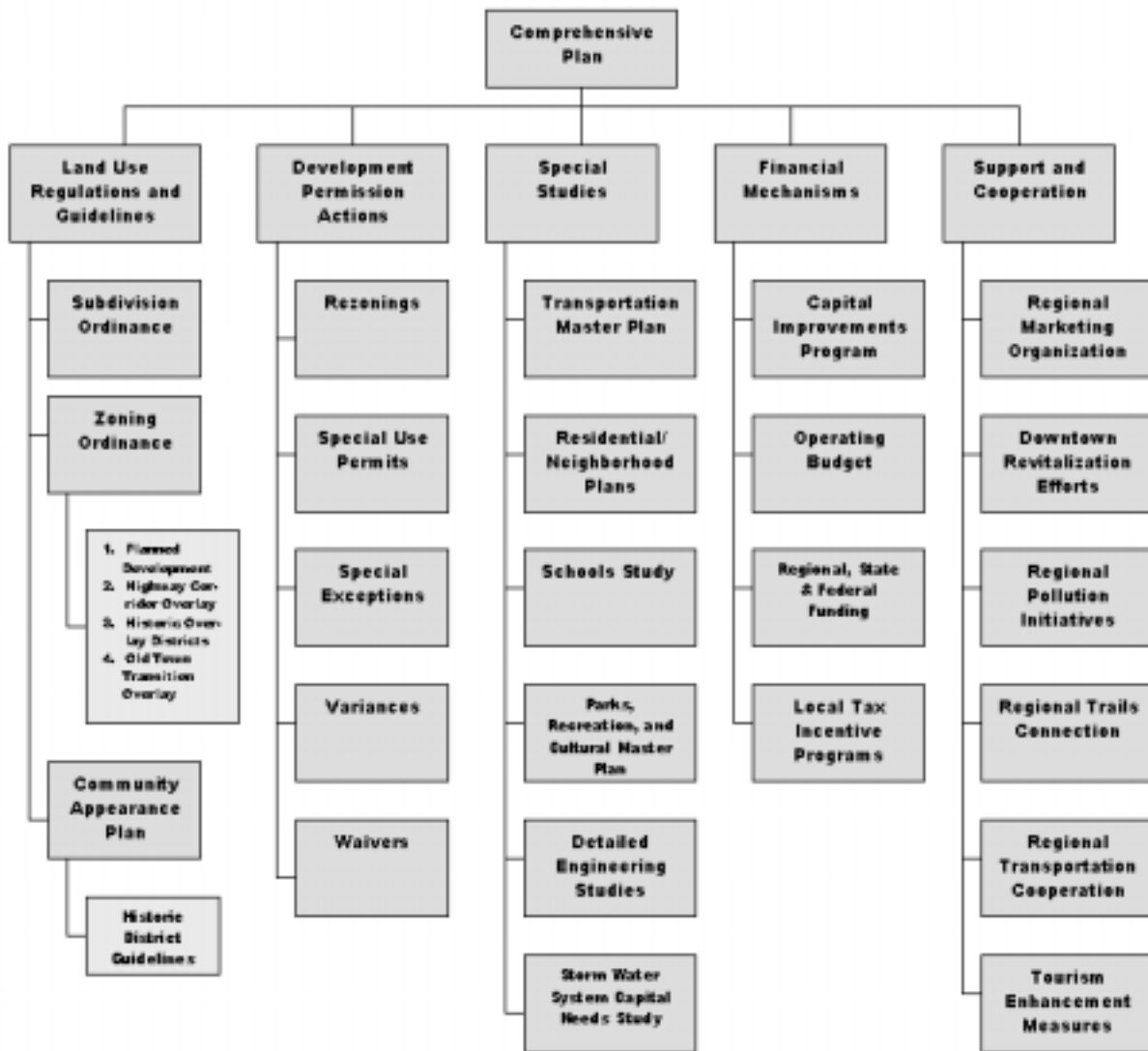
Many of the Plan's goals, objectives and recommendations are implemented through the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) process. This is the primary mechanism for funding most public facility improvements (e.g., schools, roads, parks).

The Code of Virginia allows the Planning Commission, at the direction of the Council, to "prepare and revise annually a capital improvement program based on the comprehensive plan...for a period not to exceed the ensuing five years." This CIP process allows the City to anticipate revenues and capital expenditures through the planning process rather than merely reacting to crisis situations. This facilitates a more rational, even-handed approach that permits the City to make the most of its finite financial resources.

This Comprehensive Plan provides direction for the CIP in several areas. In general, the Plan recommends that the City provide excellent facilities and services with additional emphasis placed on public education and the maintenance of existing facilities. The Plan also recommends that public capital improvements be targeted to those neighborhoods identified for rehabilitation. In addition, the Transportation Section of the Plan makes specific recommendations for road improvements and encourages the increased use of public transportation.

In addition to the CIP process, opportunities may also exist for state or federal government funding to assist in implementing this Plan. State funding has traditionally been an integral part of financing road improvements and school operations. During the 1970s, federal funding was the main support of many housing and community development projects. While those sources of funding are now limited, programs at the state and federal levels exist in the areas of housing, historic preservation, transportation enhancement, and recreation. The City should pursue those programs which will further its applicable goals.

**Figure IMP-1  
Implementation Tools**



## Plan Amendment Process

In keeping with the “living document” nature of the Comprehensive Plan, a regular process for identifying and modifying areas of the plan needing amendment should be created. Potential amendments can be suggested by the Planning Commission, staff or other City Stakeholders. This process should be undertaken twice yearly to allow timely amendment to the plan in a proactive rather than reactive manner. The deadlines for submitting proposed amendments would be March first and September first of each year. This process would be in addition to the implementation mechanisms described above.

## Community Support and Regional Cooperation

The final ingredient necessary to implement the Comprehensive Plan is the active involvement of the public. Every development-related action on the part of the City—whether a zoning change, a Capital Improvements Plan, approval of a private commercial façade renovation, or any one of the many actions which affect the development of the City—is open to public input. Elected officials and City boards and commissions need and want this public input in order to make informed decisions

that will truly benefit and reflect the wishes of the citizens of Fairfax.

The City must also seek cooperation with other public and private organizations to implement portions of the Plan. The Plan specifically recommends joint cooperation in the following areas:

- Support of a regional marketing organization to monitor economic trends and investigate methods to increase the City share of the regional commercial market.
- Continuation of City-University discussions to address student-related issues such as housing, parking, and market demand, as well as to increase coordination of City events with George Mason University.
- Support of cooperative ventures with local jurisdictions, agencies, institutions and the private sector to create opportunities for development and redevelopment, particularly in areas that span jurisdictional boundaries or have the potential for substantial regional impact.
- Support of joint agreements with local jurisdictions and agencies for human services and education, with full participation in an on-going dialogue concerning social and educational values and opportunities for the City's residents.

In addition, the City must continue to actively participate in regional organizations aimed at improving the quality of life throughout the metropolitan area. The Plan specifically advocates a regional approach in the following areas:

- Participation in regional efforts through the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC) and the Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC) to address transportation issues and the reduction of air and water pollutants.
- Coordination with the Northern Virginia Park Authority to construct trail connections to the City.